

Benton Thomas Hart

DRAWER 10C

71.2009.025.037

A faint, out-of-focus background image of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The memorial is a large, classical structure with a prominent portico of Corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment. The sky above is a pale, overcast color.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

<http://archive.org/details/abrahamlincolnscthblinc>

Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Thomas Hart Benton

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



AMERICAN HEROES

THOMAS HART BENTON, staunch friend of Jackson, senator, frontier leader, and passionate defender of the union. On the editorial page of today's Tribune Clifford Raymond writes of his part in the building of the nation.

THE thirteen colonies becoming thirteen states and forming themselves into a federal union soon found that as a nation they had offspring giving them in kind, if not at first in intensity, the same troubles and vexations that they had given their motherland and for the same reasons. They had been a frontier of the British empire. Now they had a frontier of their own. Having been dependents, they now had them. A patriot had been a man in the new lands of Great Britain who objected to British rule. A patriot now became a man in the new lands of the United States who maintained American rule, the solidity of the American Union, and the permanence of the federal government against complaint.

The Unionists in the new lands were of inestimable value to the republic, and in rough and turbulent times they were and had to be men of the greatest resolution, courage and physical hardihood. A weakling could not have had leadership or respect in the opinion of these tough citizens who fought for what they got. Andrew Jackson was one of the Unionists. His friends would be or they would not be his friends. His devotion was passionate. Thomas Hart Benton was one of his friends and was in his own right just as stout a Union man. (Benton was born in Orange county, North Carolina, March 14, 1782, and died April 10, 1858.)

The established communities looked with dread and derision at the social order of Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and the southwest, where the greatest ferment was. Jackson himself appeared as a fairly incredible creature, man killing, fire eating bully of the woods, but in truth he was an aristocrat, and his friends were like him. They would prove their gentility by challenging and killing the man who questioned it, if he were of their world, or by horsewhipping him if he were not, but the duel was still a polite form.

Benton, as was the case with nearly all these frontier leaders, had studied enough law to be admitted to the bar. He was sponsored by Jackson, then a Tennessee Supreme court justice. That was the beginning of a friendship which was odd in that it suffered an almost fatal break and then was resumed with all its former loyalty. Fatal is advisedly used. It nearly ended the lives of both men. There was a quarrel with comedy in its origin and death close to its finish.

In December, 1812, Jackson was raising a force of frontiersmen for the relief of New Orleans, then believed to be threatened as it was two years later. In exceptionally bitter weather for this region he collected the men and marched as far south as Natchez, where he had an idiotic order from the secretary of war to muster his men out. Armstrong must have thought that he would find Jackson in the neighborhood of Nashville. If the order had been obeyed the men would have been on their own to make their way back 500 miles. Jackson ignored it and issued his own notes for subsistence. The government discredited the notes. Benton, going to Washington, tried first an appeal to justice and then one to fear. The latter consideration won, and an order to honor the Jackson paper was issued.

Meanwhile, some typical rough country hazing had taken a serious turn in Jackson's little army. An easterner, later to be famous as Gen. William Carroll, one of Jackson's generals at New Orleans, had been selected for some bullying treatment, and Jesse Benton, brother of Thomas, became involved in it. The other roughs had not been of duelling status, but Benton was and was challenged. Jackson consented, reluctantly, to act as Carroll's second because it was favor shown the young man by Jackson which had brought on the bullying. Benton fired first and hit Carroll in the thumb, but he could not stand the return fire and ducked. He was hit and the wound was the most absurd which could be received in a duel. The bullet sliced a gash in his buttock and Tennessee roared with laughter.

Thomas Benton, getting a distorted story of the duel, was enraged that Jackson, whom he was then saving financially in Washington, had been a party to this family disgrace. He denounced his friend, and Jackson became angry. Benton started west, and it was inevitable that there would be a fight when the two men met. They did in front of a Nashville hotel. Jackson's friend, Gen. John Coffee, was with him. Jesse Benton fired a pistol loaded with slugs into Jackson's shoulder and maimed him for life. Benton escaped death at Coffee's hands by falling backward down a flight of stairs. In ferocity it was the worst gang fight in American politics, and it was a miracle the victims were not as numerous as the participants.

Benton removed to St. Louis in 1815, and when Missouri was admitted in 1820 he was elected United States senator, serving thirty years, five consecutive terms. His friendship with Jackson was renewed, and the two men stood shoulder to shoulder in error as well as in sound policy. With Jackson, Benton helped destroy the Bank of the United States, but he promoted the legislation which resulted in the subtreasury system. He was a slave owner from a slave state, but he held slavery to be an evil and was against its extension. He hated John C. Calhoun and the South Carolina secessionists as vigorously as Jackson did. He fought Texas pretensions to other lands which had been obtained from Mexico. He was a friend of the Pacific northwest, almost too zealous in supporting the American claims although not the extreme ones against Great Britain and welcoming a fight to sustain them. The southerners were bellicose, and they had no fear of Great Britain. They had met British soldiers at New Orleans and they had overrun Mexico.

Jackson, dying in 1845, had escaped the worst admonitions of the secession movement, but Benton, continuing in the senate until 1850, saw the dangers certainly growing, and he redoubled his efforts to fight them off. These early Unionists were in debatable territory, and if their great influence had been cast the other way slave sentiment might have come up solidly to the Ohio river and have been spread all over the territory west of the Mississippi.

When Benton was defeated after his five terms in the senate he showed the stuff that was in him. In 1852 he was a candidate for the house of representatives and was elected. His great speeches in the house against the Kansas-Nebraska bill enraged the ultra-southern supporters in the Democratic party. Benton's following in Missouri was thrown out of office by the administration and again he was defeated.

The great Unionists of which Benton was one were not only men on the volatile frontier but they were Democrats. They were the successors of the Jeffersonians whose liking for federalism had been mild enough and whose policies constantly sought the curtailment of central government at a time when it was struggling for form and substance. They were Democrats when the trend of that party was for separation and for the breaking up of the Union to sustain the property rights of slavery.

Benton was never a southerner. He was a westerner. He was for the ideal of free states spreading out to the Pacific. Like nearly all the men of backwoods training, his first oratory was crudely ornate, but it was observable that as he matured his talent ripened. He became feared as a logician and satirist—one of the very considerable men to whom the American Union owes a debt.

St. Mitchel

THOMAS H. BENTON

1. et

2/2/5

I Bibliography

Encyclopædia Britannica Vol III pp 421

Readings of American History 184--458

II Primary

30 year view of American Government 1820-1850

Maigs---Life of Benton (Best)

III Secondary

Roosevelt Life of Benton

Rogers Life of Benton

IV Fiction D. L. - Portraits of American Authors

V Objective

Mitchel

A. L. A. Portraits Grade -

Pages 3

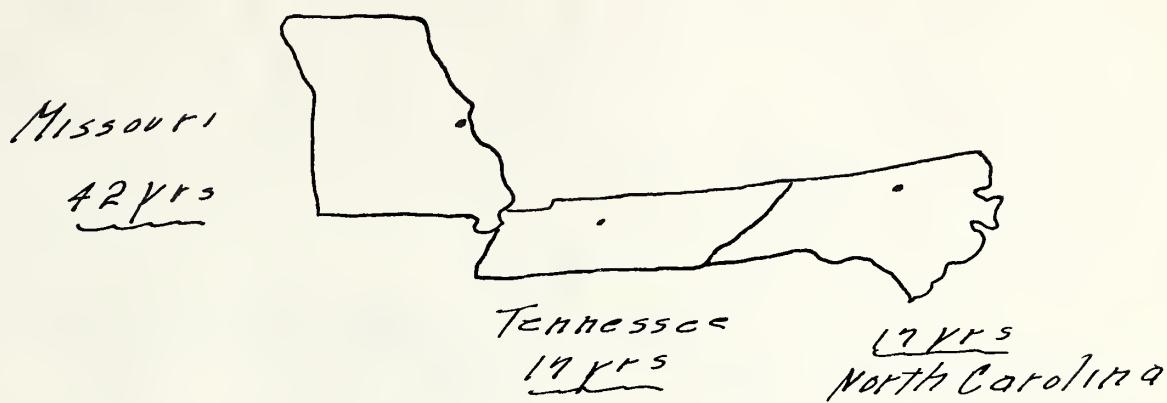
Books

Pages least

Jesus Stevens Pages 3

H. Lewis, Mo.

Thomas H. Benton



THOMAS HART BENTON

Born Orange County, N. C. March 14, 1782

Died April 10, 1858

Greatest of the Border State Leaders

Sympathy with South

Opposed aggressions of slavery and doctrines of disunion

Father died in his early years.

Eldest of large family

Took part of a course at U of Penn. then went with his mother as a pioneer to Tennessee, settling at Bentontown

Took up study of law

1811 Admitted to bar under Jackson who was Judge of Supreme Court

Elected to legislature

Pushed thru judiciary reform

Bill to give slaves jury trial

1812 Aid-de-camp to Jackson

Lieutenant Colonel in regular army, but saw no active service

1813 Sept. 4 Brother and himself duel with Jackson

1815 St. Louis Practical Law Newspapers Duels

1820 Missouri Senator

Re-elected every time for 30 years

Foremost public men of his generation

Speaker of great ability--master of facts

Iron will and physique, power of wit and sarcasm

Supported Western interests

Passed laws of pre-emption

Donation and graded prices of land

Repeal of salt tax
Advocated transcontinental railroads
A pacific railroad
Trade with New Mexico
Military stations in southwest
Peace relations with Indians
Supported Jackson in his refusal to recharter the U. S. Bank
Wanted metallic currency
Nicknamed "Old Bullion"
Was Calhoun's opponent with Jackson
Remained bitter enemies until death
Opposed Oregon boundary dispute
Favored Mexican War
Fought Calhoun's State's rights resolution
1850 Benton's senatorial service ended
1852 Returned to lower house
Against Kansas-Nebraska Bill
1854-56 Wrote memorable "Thirty Year's View" 1820-1850
1856 Ran for Governor--defeated
Supported Buchanan
1858 Died on April 10

American Statesman
L. G. Mitchell

Thomas H. Benton

I Bibli. & Bibl.

E. B. PP 451 - Vol III

J. to study & Bradley J. A. History 158-184
Pict. of H. Biography - 210 - Vol.

II Primary

3 & yr. over I know good.

Wells - Life of Benton

III Secondary

Roosevelt

Rogers - " "

IV Fiction -

V Objective -

Thomas Hart Benton
Born Orange County N. C. March 14, 1782
Died April 10, 1858.

greatest of the Border State leaders.

Sympathy with South.

Opposed aggression of slavery and主张 of division.
Father died in his early years.

Eldest of a large family

Took part of a course in U. of Penn. then went
with his mother as a pioneer to Tennessee,
settling at Bentontown.

Took up study of law

1811 - admitted to bar under Jackson who was
judge of the Supreme Court.

Elected to legislature

Pushed thru judiciary reform bill.
Bill to give slaves jury trial.

1812 - Adm. de. camp to Jackson

Lieutenant colonel in regular army. but saw
no active service.

1813 - Sept. 4. Brothers and himself due with
Jackson

1815 - St. Louis - Practiced law - newspaper - clubs

1820 - Missouri senator

Re-elected every term for 30 years.

Foremost public man of his generation.

Speaker of great ability, master of facts, iron will and physique, power of wit & sarcasm.

Supported Western interests

Passed laws of pre-emption.

Colonization & graded price of land.

Repeal of salt tax.

Advocated transcontinental railroads

& Pacific railroad

Trade with New Mexico

Military stations in southwest

Peace relations with Indians.

Supported Jackson in his refusal to recharter the U.S. bank.

Wanted metallic currency.

nicknamed old "Bullion"

Was Calhoun's chief opponent with Jackson

Remained bitter enemies until death.

Opposed Oregon boundary dispute.

Favored Mexican War.

Fought Calhoun's States right resolution.

1850 - Bruton's senatorial service ended.

1852 - Returned to lower house.
Supported Free for election
against Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

1854-56 - Wrote memorials:-
"Thirty Years View" 1820-1850.

1856 - Ran for governor - defeated.
Supported Buckner against Fremont.

1858 - April 10, died.

Thomas Hart Benton

Lineage

I. Jesse Benton (father)

1. Came from Eng. in 1765 as private sec. to William Tryon - "the next to the last of North Carolina's royal governors."¹⁴
2. His part in public affairs and in Revolution is unknown.
3. 1781 member of General Assembly of Orange County

II. Married Anne Gooch - "the only child of a younger brother of Sir Thos. Gooch, a Scotchman who had been the royal governor of Virginia from 1727 to 1749."¹⁵

1. Anne's parents had died when she was young; then she was brought up by Col. Thomas Hart, her uncle.
 - a. a daughter of Col. Hart married Henry Clay

2. Jesse Benton was scholarly, reserved, preferred life with family and library.
3. Poverty brought by Revolution forced him to turn westward. "it may be safely assumed that he was the 'Benton' whose name appears in 1775 or 1776 among the immigrants to join Boone's new settlement of Boonesborough. But he did not settle in the then West, but lived at least his latter years in the hill-country of North Carolina, near Hillsborough, Orange County."

1. Thomas Benton born here March 14, 1782.
2. Jesse was lawyer by profession; died of consumption when Thomas was 8 yrs. old.

Bibliography

I. Bibl. of Bibl.

1. *Encyclopedias Britannica* p. 421. v. 3.
2. *Guide to the Study and Reading of American History* p. 104; 458.
3. *Dictionary of American Biography*, p. 210. v. 2.

II. Primary Literary

1. *Thirty Years View of the American Government* - 2 vols. (1854-56)
2. *Abridgement of the Debates of Congress 1789-1850* (compiled by Benton) 16 v. 1857-61
3. *Historical and Legal Examination of the Dred Scott Case* (1857) - a review.
4. *John*

III. Secondary Literary

1. Meigs, H. M.
Life of Thomas Hart Benton (1904).
2. Roosevelt, T. R.
Thomas Hart Benton (1887)
(Am. St. Series)
3. Rogers, Joseph M.
Thomas Hart Benton (1905)
(Am. Crisis series)

IV. Fiction

4. John C. Fremont: *Memoirs of my Life* vi.

5. McClellan, C. L.

V. Objective Early Opposition to T. H. Benton.

(Mo. Hist. Rev. X 151-96.)

NAME Benton, T. H. Born March 14, 1782 at Hillsboro, N.C.
 Length of life Died April 10, 1858 at Washington, D.C.

LINEAGE AND ANCESTRY

Father	Mother	Brothers	sisters
<u>Jesse Benton</u>	<u>Anna Gooch</u>		

PERSONAL APPEARANCE IN MATURE YEARS

Height	Weight	Hair	Eyes
<u>6 ft.</u>			

EARLY YOUTH

Home Training at Hillsboro
Grammar school.

General Physique
 very robust and muscular
 very large head
^{p. 436} very large hands
 strong features & fine physique

EDUCATION

Elementary	Secondary
------------	-----------

College and University
U. of N. C. - 1 yr. 1799.

MARRIAGE

Date	Age	Name of wife
<u>1821</u>		<u>Elizabeth McDowell</u>

Children Living Descendants
 Mrs. J. C. Fremont (Jessie Ann)
 Eliza - wife of Tom. Gary Jones
 Sabah - " R. J. Jacob
 Susan - " Baron Baileau
 Accomplishments 2 sons
 Randolph
 James

HABITS

Alcohol	Tobacco	Sports
---------	---------	--------

RELIGION

Church Member
 According to Bay - always had pew in church - generally
 Presbyterian & attended regularly.

LIFE SERVICE

Public Offices	Other Occupations
<u>Senator</u>	<u>Lawyer</u>
<u>Representative</u>	

Authorship
Thirty Years View

FRIENDS AND ADVISORS

DEATH	Date	Cause	Place	Place of burial	Tomb
		<u>April 10, 1858. cancer</u>	<u>Washington</u>	<u>St. Louis</u>	

NOTABLE MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS

HISTORY OF LIFE	Autobiography	Biographies
-----------------	---------------	-------------

PICTURES	Portraits	Birthplace	Homes	Monuments
----------	-----------	------------	-------	-----------

DEGREES	SOCIETIES	ORDERS	DECORATIONS	ETC.
---------	-----------	--------	-------------	------

Map of Benton's Life

* ST. Louis
1815 - 1858.
Spent summers here while
in Senate at Washington



Places He Lived	Periods	Life
	1775	
1780.	Youth	Hillsborough N.CAR.
1785.		
1790.		
1795.	1799	'59. BENTON-TOWN (Leipers Fork)
1800.		
1805.		
1810.	1815.	Preparation FRANKLIN Nashville
1815.		
1820.	1820.	ST. LOUIS
1825.		
1830.		Washington D.C. (summers in St. Louis.)
1835.		Public Life
1840.		
1845.		
1850.		
1855.		LAST DAYS 1858.
1860.		
1865.		

St. of N. Carolina - 1 year.
Moved to tract of 300 acres at West Harpeth, Tenn.
Met Andrew Jackson
1806. admitted to bar.
1808. published articles on law system - Important Review
and Concise Encyclopedia (67 days - \$207.50).
1809. served term in Tenn. Senate.
1812 - Health failed. 1 side deformed. To Jackson's dual; gave redacted.
work for Jackson; then Jackson's dual; gave redacted.
1815 - Moved to St. Louis; practiced law; editor of Opuscula.
1817 - Married Elizabeth McDowell (12 years younger)
1820 - Elected one of first senators of Missouri.
1921 - Marries Elizabeth McDowell (12 years younger)
1824 - election - supporting Clay; later Jackson.
Influential in Senate. member of imp. commis. (Maj. p. 146)

St. Louis Senate
against nullifying
to change policy in sale of public lands.
war against Bank; argued for hard money.
expanding securities.
against Abolition.
Oregon question
against slavery.
Commodore of Fleet.
friendly with Greeley.

1832 - Elected to House of Representatives; lost 1834 election
Very honorable private life; wife died 1834.
Unsuccessful to attempt for governorship 1856
Died April 11, 1858 in Washington

Life of Benton
1782 - 1858.

I. Born at Hillsborough, N. Car. March 14, 1782.

A. Father died 1790 leaving boy with well educated mother who instructed him in books and piety, as well as Temperance.

1. Studied at home; U. of N. Car. 1799.

B. 1799(?) family moved to large land holdings (now Leiper's Fork) to Benton Town near Franklin, Tennessee.

1. "The following years, during which Benton was at various times school teacher, farmer, lawyer & politician, were the distinctively formative period of his life". 420

a. "His intense democracy and many features of his boldly cast personality were perfectly representative of the border people among whom he lived; although his education, social standing and force of character placed him above his fellows". 420

3. 1809 - served as State senator of Tenn.

3. 1815 - 1817 - went to St. Louis, Mo.

4. 1820 - elected Senator from Missouri.

a. Senatorial career of 30 yrs was of gret. prominence.

5. Early friendship in Tenn. with Jackson broke in 1813 in duel but after 1822 Benton became Jacksonian Democrat & closest friend of Old Hickory.

a. Was also Van Buren's right hand man - gradually lost out under Dahl.

C. Events of political life were associated with - second U. S. Bank; westward expansion and slavery.

1. Benton led J. D. Dix in struggle over bank, deposits + "expunging resolution".
 - a. Opposed national bank + wanted hard money.
 - b. "In all that concerned the expansion of the country and the fortunes of the West, no public man was more consistent or more influential than Benton, and none is clear of vision". ⁴²⁰
 - c. "He held the ultra-American views of his section as regarding foreign relations generally, and the "manifest destiny" of expansion westward especially". ⁴²⁰
2. Advocated removal of Indian tribes to west, encouraged trade with Santa Fe, opposed abandonment in Spanish Treaty of 1819 of American claims to Texas. ⁴²⁰
3. "He was the originator of the policy of homestead laws by which the public lands were used to promote the settlement of the West by home-seekers". ⁴²⁰
4. "No other man was so early and so long active for transcontinental railways". ⁴²⁰
5. Regarding Oregon - opposed joint occupation with Brit., wanted 49° boundary.
 - a. aided Polk most in 54° 40' question
6. Denounced pretenses + intrigues.
7. Attitude towards slavery.
 - a. Was southerner + slave holder but by 1844 did not want it to spread to Texas + in 1849 - took public stand against institution of slavery.

b. During struggle in territories after 1845 - he stood for justice to both sections; not extreme

"The truth is that he was always a westerner before he was a southerner and a Union man before all things else";⁴²⁰ he was no whit less national than Webster."

c. Hated Calhoun after trouble with nullification 1832-33. . . . lost sympathy with south.

d. Hated abolition propaganda but would not close mails to it or abridge right of petition.

D. Rejected by Mo. as candidate in 1851.

1. 1852 - elected to House of Representatives. His opposition to the repeal of the Mo. Comp. caused his defeat in 1854.

2. Political career ended with unsuccessful campaign for governorship of Mo. 1856.

3. Died at Washington, April 10, 1858.

II. 'Entire career was eminently creditable'⁴²⁰

1. Man of highest political principles

2. Independent, disliked caucuses & hated party platforms.

a. always voted Dem. ticket even against his son-in-law, John C. Fremont.

3. 'On large issues he outgrew partisanship.'

4. 'Although palpably inferior to each of his great senatorial colleagues, Webster, Clay and Calhoun, in some gifts, yet if character, qualities & career be taken

in the whole, his were possibly the most creditable of all".^{424-1.}

5. "B. was austere, aggressive & vain; besides, he had a fatal deficiency of humour".⁴²¹

a. had great influence.

b. an indefatigable student - "he treated all subjects capably, and especially in questions of his country's history and the exploration of the West had few equals - in the latter none".⁴²¹

6. Acted with boldness, defended his acts with courage & persistence

7. Meigs - p. 520. - Death.

"Services were held in the Second Presbyterian Church, and finally the procession moved on, partly by rail-road, to Bellefontaine Cemetery, and there on 'on the sunset side of the Father of Glades, the towering city of St. Louis on one hand, the rolling stream of the Missouri on the other', were placed at rest the mortal remains of one who was, in the highest and best sense, one of our greatest statesmen".

Excerpts from *Life*
by Roosevelt.

I. In early years in Senate.

A. Removal of Indian tribes -

1. "Here he took a most active and prominent part in reporting and favoring the bills, and in advocating the treaties, by which the Indian tribes of the South and West were forced or induced (for the latter word was very frequently used as a euphemistic synonym of the former), to abandon great tracts of ~~land~~ territory to the whites and to move farther away from the boundaries of their ever-encroaching civilization." p. 55. R.

B. Election of 1824 -

1. "He (Benton) insisted that, as Jackson had secured the majority of the electoral vote, it was the duty of the House of Representatives to ratify promptly this 'choice of the people'." p. 60.

Constitution did not state this point.

2. "As Benton, who on questions of state rights and internal improvements was so pronounced a stickler for a strict construction of the Constitution, here really assumed the absurd position that the Constitution was wrong on this particular point, and should be disregarded, on the ground that there was a struggle 'between the theory of the Constitution and the democratic principles.' His proposition was ridiculous?" p. 60.

C. On question of South American republics -
(Spanish states allowed negroes in their Congress).

1. "Certain of the slave-holders of the South objected to any such association; and on this occasion Benton for once led and voiced the ultra-Southern feeling on the subject, announcing in his speech that diplomatic intercourse with Hayti should not even be discussed in the senate chamber, and that we could have no association with republics who had "black generals in their armies and mulatto senators in their congresses".
p. 65:

D. On Tariff - 1828.

1. "Benton's attitude on the measure was that of a good many other men who, in their public capacities, are obliged to appear as protectionists, but who lack this frankness in stating their reasons. He utterly disbelieved in and was opposed to the principle of the bill, but as it had bid for and secured the interest of Missouri by a heavy duty on lead, he felt himself forced to support it; and so he announced his position".
p. 67

E. On western lands -

1. "Benton was the leading opponent of a proposal, introduced by Senator Dot of Connecticut, to inquire into the expediency of limiting the sales of public lands

as to such lands as were then in the market.

I. Civil service -

1. "Benton himself always took a sound stand on the civil service question, although his partisanship led him at times to defend Jackson's course when he must have known well that it was indefensible". p. 83.
2. "I consider "sweeping" removals as now practised by both parties, a great political evil in our country, injurious to individuals, to the public service, to the purity of elections, and to the harmony and union of the people".

from Thirty Years View. R. p. 84-5.

II. Political groups -

1. "When the rupture between Calhoun and the Jacksonian Democrats, and the resignation of the former from the vice-presidency took place, three parties developed in the U. S. Senate. One was composed of the Jacksonian Democrats, with Benton at their head; one was made up of the little band of Nullifiers, led by Calhoun; and the third included the rather loose array of the Whigs, under Clay and Webster." p. 86

III. Economics -

1. "Unfortunately Benton would interlard even his best speeches with theories of economics often more or less crude, and, still worse,

with a series of classic quotations and allusions; for he was grievously afflicted with the rage for cheap pseudo-classicism that Jefferson and his school had borrowed from the French revolutionists. You could be resist the temptation to drag in allusions to some favorite hobby. The repeal of the salt-tax was an especial favorite of his. He was perfectly right in attacking the tax, and deserves the greatest credit for the persistence which finally won him the victory". p. 92.

2. The Force bill and compromise tariff.

1. "Benton and Webster both warmly sustained the "Force bill" which was bitterly attacked by the Nullifiers and by most of the Southerners, who really hardly knew what stand to take, the leading opponent being Tyler of Virginia, whose disunion attitude was almost as clearly marked as that of Calhoun himself".

p 105.

2. "My objections to this bill, and to its mode of being passed, were deep and abiding, and went far beyond its own obnoxious provisions, and all the transient and temporary considerations connected with it. A compromise made with a state in arms is a capitulation to that state. The injury was great then, and a permanent evil example. - The framers of our Constitution established a Union

instead of a League - to be sovereign and independent within its sphere, acting ~~through~~ ^{upon} persons through its own laws and courts, instead of acting upon communities, through persuasion or force. The effect of this compromise legislation was to destroy this great feature of our Union - to bring the general and state governments into conflict & and to substitute a sovereign state for an offending individual as often as a state chose to make the cause of that individual her own." p. 108-109.

II. As a leading Democrat -

A. Attack on the bank

1. Aid to Jackson - "Benton's thorough-going support was invaluable to Jackson. The president sorely needed a friend in the Senate who would uphold him through thick and thin, and who yet commanded the respect of all his opponents by his strength, ability, and courage". p. 114-115

2. "Indeed, it would be unfair in the matter of the attack on the Bank to call Benton Jackson's follower; he might with more propriety be called the leader in the assault, although of course he could accomplish little compared with what was done by the great popular idol. He had always been hostile to the Bank, largely as a

matter of Jeffersonian tradition, and he had shown his hostility by resolutions introduced in the Senate before Jackson was elected president". p. 118.

3. "It (the Bank) tends to aggravate the inequality of fortunes! to make the rich richer and the poor poorer; to multiply nabobs and paupers; and to deepen and widen the gulf which separates Dives from Lazarus. — It is injurious to the labouring classes". p. 121.

4. "Benton said that, if the Bank conquered, the result would be the establishment of an oligarchy, and then of a monarchy, and finally the death of the Republic by corruption". p. 129

5. "Benton was the strongest hard-money man then in public life, being, indeed, popularly nick-named "Old Bullion". p. 137.

"Benton's idea of the danger to the masses from the "money power" was exaggerated; but in advocating a sound gold currency he took the surest way to overcome any possible dangerous tendency". p. 137.

B. Slavery -

"He was of course totally opposed to abolition and the Abolitionists, and showed that the movement had been to make

the lot of the slaves still worse, and for the moment to do away with any chance of intelligently discussing the question of emancipation. For, like many other Southerners, he fondly cherished the idea of a gradual, peaceful emancipation, - an idea which the course of events made wholly visionary, - but which, under the circumstances, might well have been realized" p. 165.

2. Regarding Texas -

"Much the longest and most elaborate speech in favor of the recognition of Texas's independence was made by Benton, to whom the subject appealed very strongly. He announced emphatically that he spoke as a Western senator, voicing the feeling of the West, and he was right" p. 180.

C. Money -

1. "I am one of those who promised gold, not paper; I did not join in putting down the Bank of the U. S. to put up a wilderness of local banks. I did not join in putting down the currency of a national bank to put up a national paper currency of a thousand local banks. I did not strike Caesar to make Antony master of Rome" p. 191-192

2. "Benton did not believe, as a matter of principle, in the issue of treasury notes, but supported the bill for that purpose on account of the sore straits the administration was in, and its dire need of assistance from any source." p. 198.

D. Western question -

1. 'He was always a great advocate of a homestead law' p. 217

Historical Significance

I. Characteristics and tendencies.

1. Probably the chief element in his make-up was his immense boldness. Meigs p. 442.
 - a. "His deep love of country and firm conviction that the people of whom he was one had before them a most brilliant destiny, had a profound influence upon his career at every step." 442.
2. 'Life-long thirst after knowledge from any and every source'. 442.
3. 'The immense gift of a wonderful memory, which was Benton's in the very highest degree'. 444. His memory was so well known that it is evident at times that members were a little afraid to differ with him.
 - a. had marked geographical knowledge.
 - b. wide knowledge of trade & commerce.
4. He was vain & egotistical nor was he unconscious of it.
5. 'He was at least largely the means of defeating a growing habit of unduly extending the functions of the Patent Office, which was then beginning to collect and publish agricultural statistics and to buy seeds'. 461.

II. Significance

1. "It was he who in the debates upon the Compromise Measures of 1850 showed by an investigation of the Mexican laws upon the subject in the original Spanish that slavery had been abolished in New Mexico". 464. Meigs.
2. "He was also quite enough of a states-

man to give up at times a great portion of some measure he aimed at so as to get it into such shape that halting supporters would vote with him and he could carry a part of his plan".⁴⁶⁶

3. His political morality was of high character; worked in Oregon question & Texas Tangle faithfully.

4. "Dyer says of him that he had grand and chivalrous ideas as to public duty and that as a Senator his country was his only client, and he never took a fee for prosecuting a claim against her nor lent his influence to help any one get into her treasury".⁴⁶⁸

5. Political platforms & office seeking were detested by him.

6. Urged that the Federal govt. should get out of business operations.

7. Thought that under our system of govt. disputes between States could be settled peacefully. ; thought main alliance should be in 'citizen soldiery'.

8. "There can be no doubt that, in regard to the rare quality of courage, Benton stood in a class in which few human beings can be counted, and Senator Vest is probably right in saying that his courage, morally & physically, was equal to that of any man who ever lived upon this earth".⁴⁸⁴ Meigs.

9. "Men as insistent as Benton was in the maintenance of his views of policy have an enormous influence in affairs and make a great mark on the course of legislation".⁴⁹¹ Meigs

10. Narrow escape from death on the "Princeton" 1844. Gilmer killed 'he said that it seemed to him as of the touch on his shoulder by the officer, who had led him to another position, was "the hand of the Almighty stretched down there, drawing me away from what otherwise would have been instantaneou death - That one circumstance has changed the whole current of my thoughts and life. I feel that I am a different man, and I want in the first place to be at peace with all those with whom I have been so sharply at variance". 445-6 Meigs.

11. "Benton twice declined the nomination as Minister to France, offered him by Jackson and by Polk, and also the position of Sec. of War, offered him by Van Buren". 498 Meigs.

12. "From an early day Benton was convinced that the American people had a great future ahead of them". "And, as did most of our soundest statesmen of his day, he looked with great distrust upon England, considering her as the only determined and dangerous opponent of our growth and prosperity". "To him, from the very earliest day of which we have any information, his country meant not his State or section, but the whole aggregate U. S. "499 Meigs.

13. He apprehended disunion and tried to bring forth measures to avoid it.

14. "Benton has often been compared to his three great contemporaries, and the result is fairly summed up by Bay as follows: that he was inferior to Mr. Webster as a close, logical reasoner; that he was not ^{the} equal of Mr. Clay as an orator; and

that Mr. Calhoun surpassed him in the power and condensation of language, all must admit. But in depth of mind, originality of thought, and power to conceive and execute any great measure of public welfare, he was the equal of either, and in some respects the superior of all".

Meigs p. 505.

15. "As a constructive and far-seeing statesman in the best sense of the word, he must be given the very highest credit, and some competent observers think him far the superior of all his contemporaries in this respect".⁵⁰⁵

From early youth, when he fore saw and foreshadowed how the vast unsettled Western territory could best be divided into states, down through his long career stuffed full of many policies doggedly urged for years, and possibly particularly in the hopeless struggles of his last years against the causes leading to civil war, he certainly fore saw coming events far more nearly than did his contemporaries; and he acted well up to the sound rule of simple laws intended to allow the freest possible law's scope to that individual action which is the atomic force of society, and which enables the body politic to wield the almost power of which it is capable - a power as nearly resistless, as to be comparable to those of nature.

p. 505-506 Meigs.

16. Compared with Webster - "Intellectually he cannot for a moment be compared to the great Mass. senator; but morally he towers much higher". Roosevelt. Thomas Benton
p. 112.

Lasting Achievements

1. Probably the most notable is his Thirty Years' View.

a. "One most conspicuous feature of the whole book has ^{been} already adverted to, — its kindly judgment of his contemporaries." 513 Meigs.

11

Thomas Hart Benton
(1782-1858)



HILLSBORO ⑯

NORTH CAROLINA

FRANKLIN, TENN. 10

ST LOUIS ②

WASHINGTON ⑯

Bibliography.

I. Bibl. of Bibl.

1. Ency Brit. Vol. III, 754 OE

II Primary Literary Sources.

1. "Thirty Years View of the American Government.
T. H. Benton

2. Abridgment of the Debates of Congress.
J. H. Benton

3. Historical and Legal Examination of "the Dred Scott Case"
T. H. Benton

III. Secondary Literary Sources:

1. Life of Thomas Hart Benton

W. M. Meigs

2. Thomas Hart Benton in "American Statesman"
Theodore Roosevelt.

3. Thomas Hart Benton in "Am. Crisis Series"
Joseph M. Rogers

Life
(1782-1858)

Born March 14, 1782 at Hillsborough,
Orange Co. North Carolina.

I Formative Period:

1790 Father - an English gentle-
man of refinement and
scholarship, - died.

Mother taught him "learning,
piety and temperance"
quite unusual in frontier
life.

1799 U. of N. Carolina. (Chapel Hill)
Moved to Leipers Fork,
near Franklin Tenn.

School Teacher - farmer-
lawyer and politician
in turn until

1809 when he was elected
state senator.

II Public Life

1809 Senator of state of N. C.

1815-1817 St Louis, Missouri

{ 1820. U. S. Senator "

{ 1851

Anti-Bank

Westward Expansion -

Slavery -

Originator of "Homestead Act"

Did not believe in
slavery, altho a slave
holder.

Held the Union first -
so broke with South -
and lost senatorship

1852. House of Representatives.

Opposed repeal of
Compromise of 1850 so
lost election in 1854.

1858 Died in Washington,
April 10th.

"Altho palpably inferior to each
of his great senatorial col-
leagues, Webster, Clay and
Calhoun, in some gifts, yet
if character qualities
and career be taken in the
whole his were possibly
the most creditable of all"

Ency. Brit. 753.

